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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to replicate the research results of Frances Fuller regarding concerns and emotional maturity of prospective teachers. The report focused on the questions (a) Do concerns of prospective teachers tend toward universality? and (b) What are the programmatic implications? Subjects for this study were education majors whose experience ranged from no education courses to certification. The survey results confirmed the Fuller findings, though between-group differences in terms of three concern levels were not statistically significant, and most majors tended to be at lower maturity levels. The implication is that education programs may well require revision to reflect student concerns. (The report includes tables depicting standard deviations and variances of the four sample groups, and figures illustrating respondents' concern scores.) (Author/JS)

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A STUDY OF THE CONCERN LEVELS OF TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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A STUDY OF THE "CONCERN" LEVELS OF TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to replicate the results of research by Dr. Frances Fuller regarding the "Concerns" and emotional maturity of prospective teachers. The questions were: do Concerns of prospective teachers tend toward universality and what are the programmatic implications? Samples were drawn from "majors" whose experience ranged from no education courses to certification. Results tended to confirm the Fuller findings, though between-group differences in terms of the three Concern Levels was not statistically significant and most "majors" tended to be at lower maturity levels. The implication is that education programs may well require revision to reflect student Concerns.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study was undertaken to replicate the results of previous work done by Dr. Frances F. Fuller of the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education--The University of Texas at Austin (1,2). For her study, Dr. Fuller developed an instrument known as the "Teacher Concerns Statement" for assessing and evaluating the concerns of teachers and prospective teachers. From her findings, Dr. Fuller proposed a theory of hierarchical levels of concerns which she termed "phases." Phase I in her theory is the "Phase of Concerns About Self." In this phase the subject manifests concerns unrelated to teaching, such as concerns about grades, or one's social life, etc. In the second phase, the "Phase of Concerns About Self as Teacher," the subject expresses concern about himself as a teacher--concerns about his relationship to the administration, about his adequacy as a teacher, etc.

Finally, in Phase III--Phase of Concerns About Pupils"--the subject's concerns center predominantly around the pupils--if they are learning the material the teacher presents, if they are learning what they need, etc.

Dr. Fuller has further shown that these three phases represent a chronological succession of levels of teaching maturity. In other words, Phase I represents the lowest level of maturity, Phase II the next, and Phase III the final, or ultimate, level. Her studies also revealed that the lower levels of concerns exist mainly among undergraduate education students, especially those with little or no actual teaching experience. Thus, as one gains experience in teaching, theoretically one progresses to a higher level of concern. (Although actual studies show that few teachers ever reach the Phase III level).

The paradox of the situation, though, seems to be that while most education students express Phase I or Phase II concerns, most education courses are geared to the Phase III concern level. In other words, most teacher preparatory programs tend to focus on the higher, more abstract issues in education--such as learning theories, educational philosophies, etc. while neglecting the more fundamental aspects--like "how to teach math" or "how to discipline children"--which are of much greater importance to students at this stage. Consequently, many can not and do not receive the benefits they should from their education courses. Dr. Fuller has, therefore, carried out additional research to aid higher educational institutions in helping to raise the level of concerns of their students, and ultimately to

produce better teachers (3).

This study was done, then, not only to verify Dr. Fuller's findings, but also to assess the concern levels of education students at the State University College of Arts and Sciences at Geneseo.

POPULATION AND METHODOLOGY

Subjects for this study were secondary, elementary, early childhood, special education, and deaf education majors drawn from the total population of students at the State University College of Arts and Science at Geneseo. The subjects were divided into four categories, or groups, based upon their teaching experience, and from these four groups four samples, consisting of one hundred (100) subjects each, were chosen, using a table of random numbers.

Group A consisted of education majors who had not taken any education courses, nor had any experience in classroom teaching. Students in this group, however, may have taken some education-related courses, such as Educational Psychology or Human Development, but again, they had no education courses per se. These restrictions did limit the size of this particular group, though, resulting in a total population of only ninety (90) subjects. Consequently, all members were used in this study.

Group B was composed of those education majors who had taken some or all of the necessary education courses, but had not gone out student teaching. This group included many students with participation

experience, but again, no one in this category had student taught.

Group C comprised all the current student teachers--those student teaching spring semester.

Group D consisted of the education majors who had completed their student teaching, but were not actually teaching yet.

Once the subjects were drawn, an adapted version of Dr. Fuller's "Teacher Concerns Statement" was developed, along with an introductory letter advising the students of the nature of this study and hopefully eliciting greater cooperation from them.

The first section of the questionnaire remained essentially similar to Dr. Fuller's in that it simply asked the respondent for biographical data--which was necessary to properly categorize each questionnaire. The subject was not asked to reveal his identity; however, each questionnaire was coded making identification possible. The purpose for this, though, was to keep a record of those subjects who failed to respond in order that further action could be taken to contact them.

(As is typical with college students, response rates were quite low and additional attempts were therefore made to contact subjects--through the campus newspaper, college supervisors, and phone calls--to initiate their cooperation. Nevertheless, the average rate of response per group was roughly about 30%.)

The second part of the questionnaire--the question itself- was again similar to Dr. Fuller's--with two basic exceptions:

The first exception is that the question designed for this study, while asking the subject to identify his concerns, asks him to list these concerns in order of importance rather than to write about them in essay form (as in Dr. Fuller's study). The primary advantage of this method is that it facilitates evaluation of the concerns, because the scorer does not have to read an essay and try to determine how many concerns the subject has discussed and what these concerns are. Thus, the results obtained may be somewhat more accurate, and less open to the biases of the evaluator.

The second exception is that the question for this study was designed to explain the concept of 'concern' in more explicit terms. This adaptation was carried out after a preliminary test sample was run prior to the actual study, and several subjects (not used in the actual study) expressed confusion over the term.

Other than these two adaptations, the question used in this study and in Dr. Fuller's are, in essence, similar enough to allow the evaluation techniques used for one to be used for the other. Therefore, the results obtained in both studies are comparable.

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The evaluation technique and scoring code were the same ones used by Dr. Fuller, with some necessary modifications made, due to the uniqueness of some of the responses obtained in this study. However, careful considerations were given to try and preserve the basic forms used in the original study. The following evaluation code represents the final, modified version.

I. Concerns About Self

Code 0--Non-teaching Concerns

"Statement contains information or concerns which are unrelated to teaching."

--This statement by Dr. Fuller was interpreted to include concerns which were totally unrelated to teaching as well as those dealing with economic issues--like the availability of teaching jobs, salary scales, etc. Also, concerns about furthering one's education were included in this category.

II. Concerns About Self as Teacher

Code 1--Where Do I Stand?

"Concerns with orienting one's self to a teaching situation, i.e., psychological, social, and physical environment of the classroom, school, and/or community. Concerns about supervisors, cooperating teachers, principal, parents. Concerns about evaluation, rules, or administrative policy, i.e., concerns about authority figures and/or acceptance by them."

--This category was interpreted to include areas concerning teacher unions, strikes, curriculum requirements, availability and types of resources within a school system, concerns about legal matters, etc. Also, a finer distinction was drawn in this study over concerns dealing with the respondent's relationship with other teachers and parents. If the concern centered primarily around these relationships themselves, i.e., acceptance by other teachers or ability to deal with parents, then the response was categorized under this code. If, however, the concern dealt with parents and teachers, and their roles in the growth

and development of the child, then it was felt that the subject was manifesting a higher level of concern and the response was classified under code 5.

Code 2--How Adequate Am I?

"Concern about one's adequacy as a person and a teacher. Concern about discipline and subject matter adequacy."

--This category, as defined by Dr. Fuller, tended to be rather ambiguous and often appeared to be sort of a catch-all. The main determinant in evaluating concerns for this category, then, was based, in many instances, upon the evaluator's drawing a rather fine distinction between responses. If a particular response was made in reference to the questioning of the subject's ability or adequacy in the teaching role, then it was classified under this code.

For example: "Will I be able to keep my students interested and happy in school?"

Whereas, if the response referred to students and a desire that they benefit from the teaching situation, then the concern was categorized under code 4.

For example: "I am concerned that my lessons stimulate the various interests of my students."

The latter respondent appears to possess a greater degree of confidence than the former, and is concerned with actually interesting her students rather than "hung up" on questioning her ability to do so. This was the prime differentiating feature in many cases.

Also, presumably after reading the introductory letter stating the purpose of this study, many subjects offered suggestions or voiced

criticisms of the current educational programs at Geneseo. All such responses were arbitrarily classified under this category, because it was felt that these suggestions and/or criticisms centered around the prospective teacher and questioned the development of his/her abilities.

Code 3--How Do Pupils Feel About Me? What Are Pupils Like?

"Concern about personal, social, and emotional relationships with pupils. Concern about one's own feelings toward pupils and about pupil's feeling toward the teacher."

--This category was self-explanatory. The only additional inclusion here were concerns about one's pupils liking or disliking school.

III. Concern About Pupils

Code 4--Are Pupils Learning What I'm Teaching?

"Concern about whether pupils are learning material selected by the teacher. Concern about teaching methods which help pupils learn what is planned for them. Concern about evaluating pupil learning."

--This category was also self-explanatory, except for the distinction previously discussed under code 2. Also, in responses that dealt with methods of teaching, if the concern was primarily over the subject's ability to use or carry out a particular method, then the response was categorized under code 2. If, though, the concern was with teaching methods in relation to student learning, then the response was classified under this code.

Code 5--Are Pupils Learning What They Need?

"Concern about pupils learning what they need as persons. Concern about teaching methods (and other factors) which influence that kind of learning."

--This category was interpreted to include concerns about the effects

of parents and teachers on the growth and development of the child, concerns about the caliber of other teachers in the field, concerns over the diagnosis and treatment of special problems regarding students, especially handicapped ones, and concerns dealing with teaching subjects which are relevant to the students of today.

Code 6--How Can I Improve Myself As A Teacher? (And Improve All That Influences Pupils?)

"Concern with anything and everything which can contribute to the development not only of the pupils in the class, but of children generally. Concern with personal and professional development, ethics, educational issues, resources, community problems, and other events in or outside the classroom which influence pupil gain."

--This category was a little difficult to score, because it was applicable to many responses which were classified under lower level codes. The rule of thumb that was used here was, therefore, that no response be classified under this category if it was possible to classify it under another. This tended to eliminate most of the difficulty.

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INSTRUCTIONS FOR SCORING

Adapted from Dr. Fuller's "Teacher Concerns Statement" Scoring Manual

1.) Read the whole statement through once.

2.) Assign one of the seven concern codes to each concern by writing a number 0 to 6 in the side margin.

3.) Statements should be interpreted in context. A rule of thumb might be applied to questionable statements. For example, if the majority of the concerns are codes 1, 2, or 3, the assumption is that a questionable statement is a low level one. Likewise, if a statement is accompanied by codes 4, 5, or 6, the assumption is that it is a higher level of concern.

4.) After all concerns have been coded, add the codes in the side margin. Obtain an average (mean) score by dividing the sum by the number of coded concerns. Do not count a "0" code when averaging unless the only concerns expressed are "0"s. The result is the students concerns score. This score indicates where the teacher or prospective teacher is placed on the continuum of concern-with-self (low level concern) to concern-with-pupils (high level concern).

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FINDINGS

Once the questionnaires were evaluated, and the results compiled, some interesting characteristics of the four samples emerged. (Refer to Table 1) First of all, it was noted that the majority of the subjects were female-consistent with enrollments. Furthermore, most of the respondents majored in elementary education with secondary and special education (CRMD) second in line. Also, as the groups progressed from A to D by virtue of the amount of teaching experience of the subjects in each category, so, too, did the level of class standing progress from Group A to D. Thus, the majority of freshmen were found in Group A, while the majority of seniors were found in Group D.

A look at the average number of concerns for the four samples shows that these, also, tended to progress in number from Group A to D, although the differences were rather slight. Still it appears that respondents in Group A tended to list fewer numbers of concerns, and also lower levels of concerns than those in Groups B, C, or D. And those in Group B appear to list fewer numbers of concerns than those in Group C and D, although not necessarily lower in concern level, and so on down the line.

TABLE 1

THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF CONCERNS

Group A (no education courses)

SAMPLE SIZE	SEX	AVER. # CONCERNS	GRADES	MAJORS
30	27-females 3-males	3.63	2-seniors 4-juniors 8-sophomores 16-freshmen	12-second. 9-elem. 5-CRMD 3-double*

Range of scores: 0-5.3

Group B (no student teaching)

SAMPLE SIZE	SEX	AVER. # CONCERNS	GRADES	MAJORS
28	25-females	3.69	2-seniors 23-juniors 3-sophomores 0-freshmen	5-second. 10-elem. 6-CRMD 6-double* 1-deaf ed.

Range of scores: 1.0-5.0

Group C (currently student teaching)

SAMPLE SIZE	SEX	AVER. # CONCERNS	GRADES	MAJORS
25	24-females 1-male	4.12	18-seniors 7-juniors 0-sophomores 0-freshmen	3-second. 12-elem. 3-CRMD 7-double*

Range of scores: 1.0-5.3

Group D (certified)

SAMPLE SIZE	SEX	AVER. # CONCERNS	GRADES	MAJORS
40	36-females 4-males	4.38	39-seniors 1-junior 0-sophomores 0-freshmen	10-second. 20-elem. 4-CRMD 6-double*

Range of scores: 1.0-5.3

*Double majors were any combination of elementary and CRMD, CRMD and speech, elementary and deaf education, secondary and deaf education.

A brief look at the sample sizes shows that Groups A, B, and C were fairly close in size, with Group C being the smallest--due to the great difficulty of contacting student teachers currently in the field. Group D, however, was somewhat larger than all the others, which was attributed to two factors. First, that these respondents seemed to be more anxious than the others to cooperate, probably because, having gone through the system, they had a better overview of the educational program and thus were more willing to offer their opinions and criticisms of it. Also, since one of the researchers, herself, would be classified under this category, many of the respondents were personal friends who would naturally be more inclined to cooperate in the study. Nevertheless, the range of scores shows, surprisingly, that, regardless of sample size, there was very little difference between the lowest and the highest concern scores for all the groups, especially Groups B, C, and D.

After these results were compiled, means and standard deviations were computed for each of the four samples, and an analysis of variance was run to determine the significance of the differences between them. (See Table 2) The "F" ratio, however, came out to be 1.11, which proved to be statistically insignificant, thus meaning that the differences between these samples were not great enough to substantiate the previous interpretations drawn from Dr. Fuller's studies.

However, during the evaluation process differences were noted by the evaluator between the four sample groups. Consequently, four graphs

TABLE 2

MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR THE FOUR SAMPLE GROUPS

GROUPS	A	B	C	D
CELL SIZE	30	28	25	40
CELL MEAN	2.29	2.31	2.68	2.72
CELL STANDARD DEVIATION	1.43	.98	1.08	1.28

ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE FOUR SAMPLE GROUPS: A, B, C, & D

SOURCE	SS	df	MS	"F"
BETWEEN GROUPS	4.96	3	1.65	1.11
WITHIN GROUPS	176.50	119.0	1.48	
TOTAL	181.46	122.0		

were drawn (See Figures 1-4) to depict these differences. Comparing the graphs of Groups A and B, very little difference in the spread of the respondents' concern scores is noted, although the bulk of the responses in Group B appear to be of a somewhat lower level. Most responses, however, are in the 2.0-2.4 category. In the third graph, a similar spread of concern scores is noted with the majority of responses also in the 2.0-2.4 category, although one sees an increase in responses in category 4.0-4.4. However, for Group D, a somewhat different picture emerges. Instead of the sharply peaked bar graphs of the previous groups, one notices a more flattened, symetrical configuration. This difference may be attributed to a more even distribution in the spread of scores, though the range of scores is still the same, or very similar to the other groups. Most of the responses, again, are in the Phase II level; however, they are more equally divided among the twelve categories, with categories 2.0-2.4 and 2.5-2.9 having the most responses. The higher score levels also contain a greater number of responses in this sample group than in the preceding ones. Thus, while the analysis of variance shows that the magnitude of the differences between the four sample groups is not statistically significant, the graphs depict the differences which do exist and, even though not statistically significant, are still of consequence to this study.

FIGURE 1

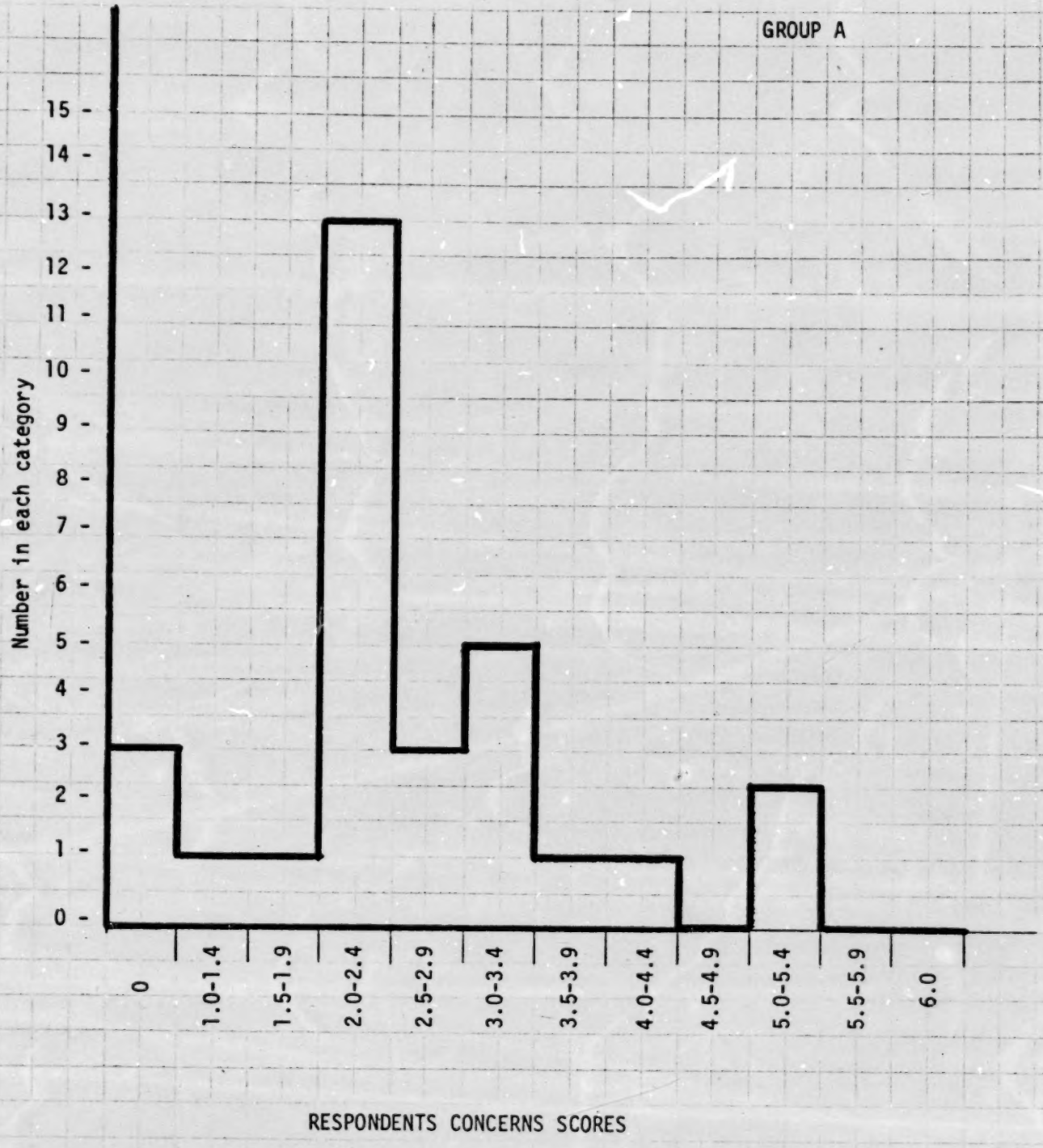

GROUP A
Number in each category
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
0
1.0-1.4
1.5-1.9
2.0-2.4
2.5-2.9
3.0-3.4
3.5-3.9
4.0-4.4
4.5-4.9
5.0-5.4
5.5-5.9
6.0
RESPONDENTS CONCERNS SCORES

FIGURE 2

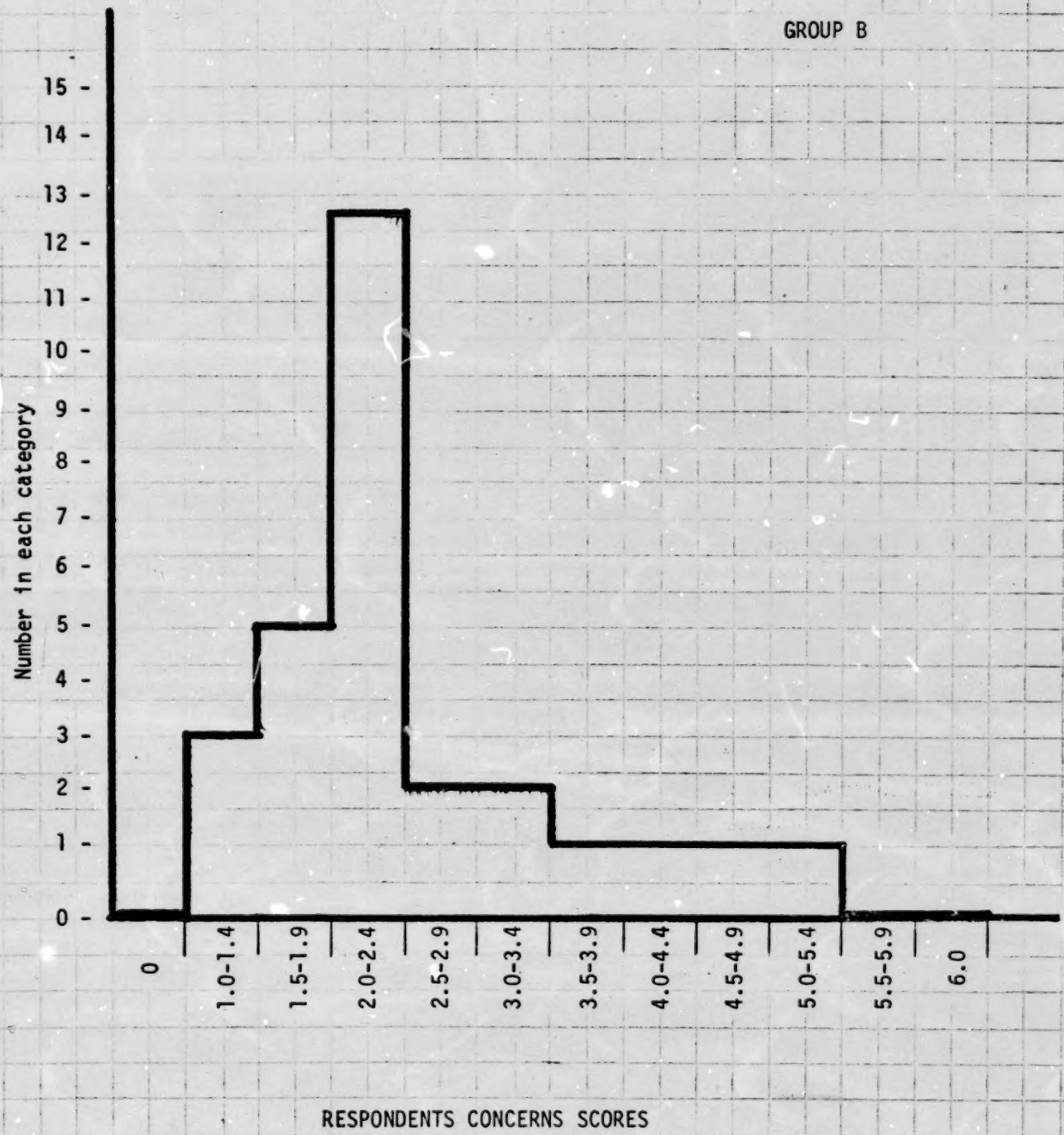

GROUP B
Number in each category
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
0
1.0-1.4
1.5-1.9
2.0-2.4
2.5-2.9
3.0-3.4
3.5-3.9
4.0-4.4
4.5-4.9
5.0-5.4
5.5-5.9
6.0
RESPONDENTS CONCERNS SCORES

FIGURE 3

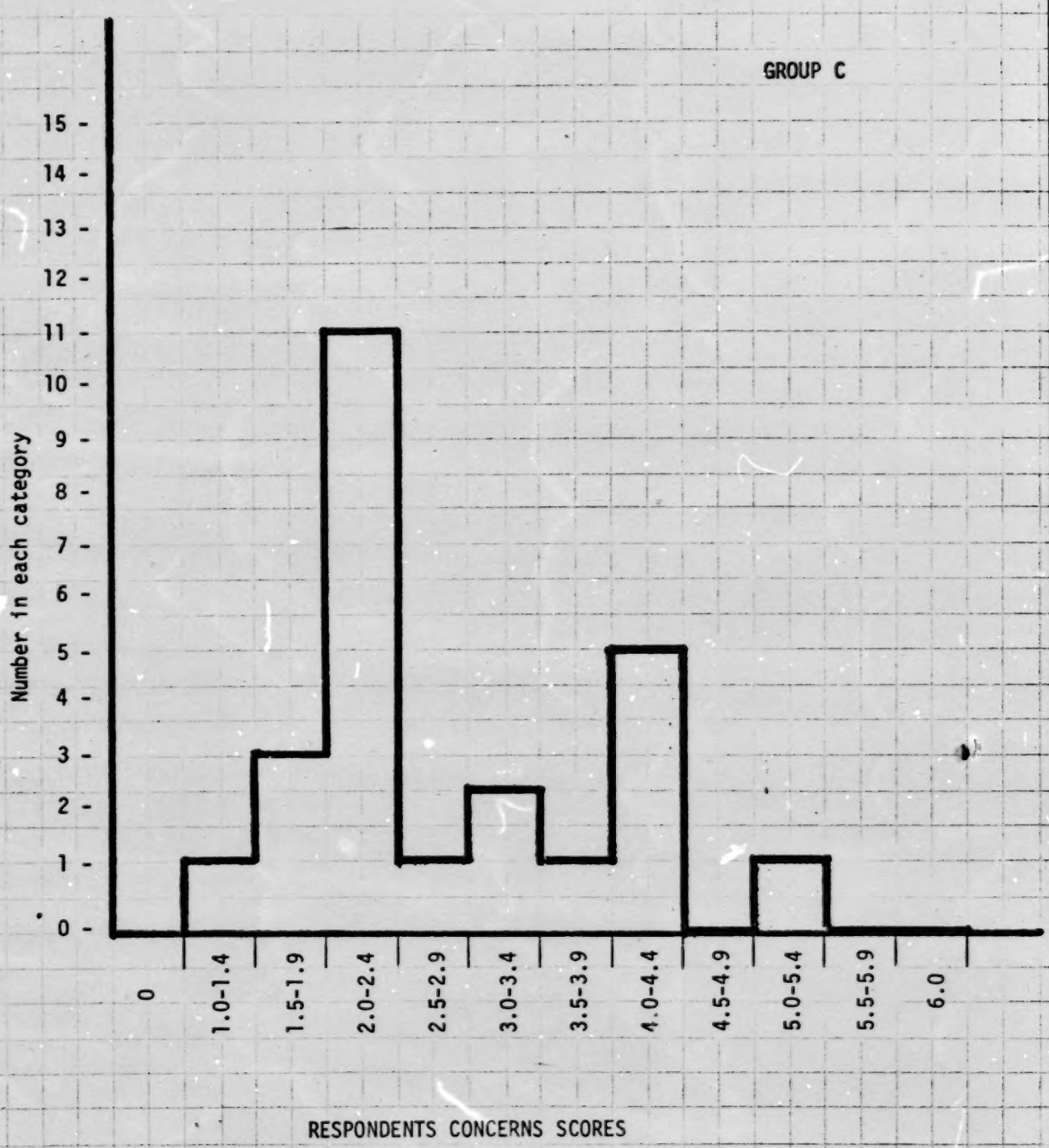
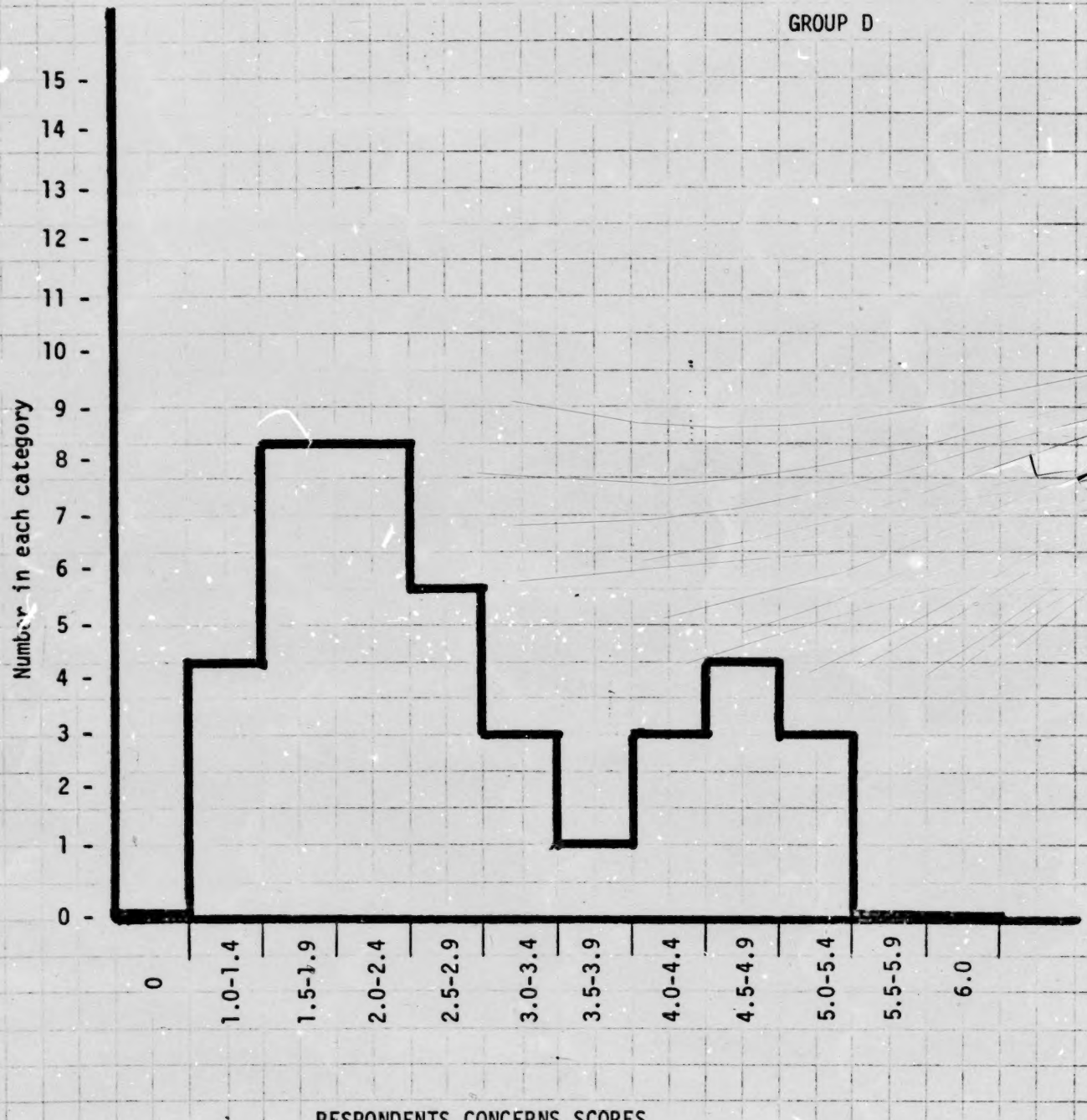

GROUP C
Number in each category
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
0
1.0-1.4
1.5-1.9
2.0-2.4
2.5-2.9
3.0-3.4
3.5-3.9
4.0-4.4
4.5-4.9
5.0-5.4
5.5-5.9
6.0
RESPONDENTS CONCERNS SCORES

FIGURE 4


GROUP D
Number in each category
15
14
13
12
11
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
0
1.0-1.4
1.5-1.9
2.0-2.4
2.5-2.9
3.0-3.4
3.5-3.9
4.0-4.4
4.5-4.9
5.0-5.4
5.5-5.9
6.0
RESPONDENTS CONCERNS SCORES

CONCLUSIONS

From the results of this study, one may conclude that, based upon statistical analysis, there was no significant difference among the concern levels of the subjects in the four sample groups. It was shown, though, that most of the student concerns were at the Phase I or Phase II level of Dr. Fuller's concerns model. However, the progression of these concerns to higher levels through teaching experience is not evident from the data. One may again examine the four graphs, though, especially for Group D, to see that there is some indication that such a progression does occur, although not to a degree of statistical significance.

Nonetheless, these findings do hold many important implications for those instructors in institutions of higher education. They do show that there is incongruency between the concerns of undergraduate students and those current educational programs that are geared toward higher, more abstract, theoretical levels. In essence, this incongruency or inconsistency may not allow the student to gain the benefit he or she should from his or her courses. The student is, for the most part, too involved with lower level concerns to appreciate a course based on higher levels of concern. Therefore, educators should be aware of this fact, and take measures to correct this inconsistency by helping to raise the concern levels of the students. The fact that the students here express mostly low level concerns and that the only indications of any progression to higher levels occurs after student

teaching may, in fact, may not disprove Dr. Fuller's findings, but rather point out the apparent failure of the educational programs to meet and raise the over-all concern level of the students. Therefore, important considerations should be given to Dr. Fuller's studies, and an analysis made of the education courses offered at other institutions as well to see what steps may be taken to rectify this situation.

Further benefit might also be gained by identifying some of the concerns of students in other institutions and in other professional training programs. The object would be to gain insights into what things are currently of most importance to the students, and possibly what steps could be taken to meet these concerns.

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